Preschool–Grade 6

The Golden Calf

Sunday School Lesson for Kindergarten to 2nd Grade, 45 minutes

Main point: Worship God only. God wants first place in our hearts, and He is merciful when we turn back to Him.
Bible passage: Exodus 32. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." *Exodus 20:3 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible, 4 paper strips, 9 sheets of paper, a marker, tape, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the 4 paper strips (see part 4) and one word on each sheet of paper (see part 6). Put bookmarks in your Bible at Exodus 32:14 and Exodus 20:3.

1. Opening game: Forty Count (5 minutes)

Everyone stands up and freezes in a statue pose. Count slowly out loud to forty. Anyone who moves sits down, then stands up and freezes again for the next round. Play two rounds. Then ask: *Was it hard to wait? What if you had to wait forty days?* Say: "Today we will hear a true story about people who did not wait for Moses, and what they did instead of waiting on God."

2. Bible story: Only God Is God (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Exodus 32, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

God had brought His people Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 20:2). Now they were camped by a mountain called Sinai. God called **Moses** up on the mount to talk with Him, and Moses was there forty days and forty nights (24:18). God gave Moses two **tables of stone**, flat pieces of stone, written with the finger of God (31:18).

Down in the camp, the people saw that Moses was taking a long time to come down. They said to Moses' brother **Aaron**, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us." They said they did not know what had happened to Moses (32:1). Aaron said, "Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me" (32:2). All the people brought him their gold earrings (32:3). Aaron melted the gold and shaped it with a tool into a **molten calf**, a calf made of melted gold (32:4). Then the people said, **"These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt"** (32:4). Say: "But a gold calf can't do anything! It was God who brought them out of Egypt" (20:2). Aaron built an altar in front of the calf, and the next day the people gave offerings and sat down to eat and drink (32:5–6).

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The story continues: Up on the mount, God told Moses, "Go, get thee down" (32:7). God said the people had turned aside quickly out of the way He commanded them. They had made a molten calf and worshipped it (32:8). God was angry with the people (32:10). But Moses prayed for them. He begged God to turn from His anger, and to remember His promise to Abraham, Isaac and Israel (32:11–13). **Read Exodus 32:14 from your Bible:** "And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people." Say: "That means God listened to Moses' prayer, and He did not destroy the people. God showed **mercy**: kindness we don't deserve."

Moses went down from the mount with the two tables of stone in his hand. They were written on both sides, and the writing was the writing of God (32:15–16). When Moses came near the camp and saw the calf, he was very angry. He threw the tables out of his hands, and they broke at the bottom of the mount (32:19). Moses took the calf the people had made and burned it in the fire. He **ground it to powder**, as fine as dust, and scattered it on the water (32:20).

The next day Moses told the people, "Ye have sinned a great sin." Then he went back up to the LORD to pray for them again (32:30–31). And God told Moses to keep leading the people to the place He had promised (32:34).

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. Where was Moses while the people waited? *(On the mount with God, forty days and forty nights, Exodus 24:18)*
2. What did Aaron make out of the golden earrings? *(A molten calf, 32:2–4)*
3. Who really brought Israel out of Egypt? *(The LORD, 20:2)*
4. What did Moses do when God was angry with the people? *(He prayed for them, 32:11–13)*
5. What happened to the tables of stone when Moses saw the calf? *(He threw them down and they broke, 32:19)*

4. Memory verse: One God Strips (5 minutes)

Tape the 4 strips up in order: *Thou shalt have / no other gods / before me. / Exodus 20:3.* Explain the old words: **thou shalt** means "you must," and **before me** means in front of God or in His place. Nothing gets to be ahead of God. Read the verse together while everyone holds up one finger: there is one God (Deuteronomy 6:4). Then take one strip away and read it again. Keep taking strips away, one each time, until the kids can say the whole verse by themselves.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "The people put a gold calf in God's place. But only God is God, and He wants first place in our hearts. God loves you very much. But everyone has done wrong things. The Bible calls that sin: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us how to obey the gospel, the good news about Jesus: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means we are sorry for our sin and we turn away from it. We are **baptized**, buried all the way under the water, in Jesus' name, so our sins are washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). **Remission** means God takes our sins away. And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, His own Spirit, and we speak in other tongues, words God gives us, just like the believers did in the Bible (Acts 2:4)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: put God first every day. Talk to God first thing each morning, before anything else.

6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: the **golden calf word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/golden-calf-word-search), crossword (vbshq.com/puzzles/golden-calf-crossword), maze (vbshq.com/puzzles/golden-calf-maze) or worksheet (vbshq.com/worksheets/golden-calf-worksheet), the coloring page or craft (vbshq.com/bible-stories/golden-calf), or **Verse Hop:** lay the 9 sheets of paper on the floor in a path, one word on each: *Thou / shalt / have / no / other / gods / before / me. / Exodus 20:3.* Kids take turns hopping from sheet to sheet, saying each word as they land. Then mix up the sheets and let the class put them back in order.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, You are the only God. Help us put You first in everything. Help us wait on You when waiting is hard. Thank You for Your mercy, and for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks why Moses broke the tables: say, "Moses' anger waxed hot, which means he was very angry, when he saw what the people had done" (32:19). Later God told Moses to cut two new tables, and God wrote on them again (Exodus 34:1). God was still merciful to His people.
Left out on purpose: this lesson tells Exodus 32:1–20 and 32:30–34 simply, and leaves out the rest of the chapter (32:21–29 and 32:35). Read the whole chapter yourself before class. If a child asks about it, keep it short: God is holy, and what the people did was a great sin (32:30).

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